

*ZION CHURCH:
NOT JUST A SUNDAY CHURCH*

by: Jewelz Weston

Another Sunday service has gone by but this particular service was more stressful than usual. Met with blatant opposition smothered and fueled with racism, sexism and a minuscule congregation, Rev. Smith feels extremely disgruntled and discouraged finding herself seriously doubting her call to worship and her purpose. Making sure that all of the windows and doors of the church are sealed and that the sanctuary is spotless, Rev. Smith finally is ready to leave.

In a mad hurry to get out, she begins to leave a trail of turned off lights behind her as she reaches the front door. At the same time as she turns out the last light, she opens the door and gets a heart stopping surprise; a skeleton figure of a once healthy and "alive" body falls into her arms. Holding the body close to her, she can feel the faint beat of a weak heart and she could barely hear a voice that was saying "help me". Through the smell of vomit and alcohol, Rev. Smith questions her call to service no more. She knew that she was sent to help heal the "street torn souls".

Born and raised in Newark, NJ, the now Reverend Loretta P. Smith-Koffi, was predestined to serve the community in which she grew up. Reverend Koffi believes that "there is no ministry without education. The two go hand-in-hand. The way out, says Koffi, is through education. If you've never been exposed to anything different, you'll never know that there are differences, therefore, you'll never want anything different."

Although she lives in Barnegat, NJ with her husband, Statesman Bernard Koffi and their two children, Emmanuel and Mica and their God family, Jacqueline and Nahor, Newark has always been in her heart. As a result of her love, she is working in a plethora of areas to revitalize a broken and forgotten city. She has been instrumentally involved with several literacy programs in Newark, in which she founded, to provide the extra help that is so desperately needed to educate the people. She has a firm hand in service to her community.

At the present time, Reverend Koffi is working full steam ahead as the director and founder of Hope Academy an Alternative Christian High School at Zion Church for those who want the education and moral standards back together where they belong. Hope Academy is just one of many services that are available to the public. Along with the high school, Zion Church offers a soup kitchen, food and clothing distribution, free tutorial program, counseling, ministry training, young mens and youth ministries and so much more.

Zion Church has just begun a celebration to commemorate its 100 year anniversary and Reverend Koffi is very pleased and excited about being a part of something so outstanding and God driven. Numerous events are being planned from now until July 1998 and beyond to mark this historial event. Zion Church is also going to be historicalized by the city of Newark.

Zion Church is not just a Sunday church. It's an everyday, life changing and God loving community that's on the move.